



ANCIENT EGYPT

LITHOGRAPHS BY DAVID ROBERTS, R.A.

TEXT BY FABIO BOURBON



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DAVID ROBERTS, AN ARTIST DEVOTED TO ADVENTURE

1 bottom left
This black and white portrait by David Roberts appeared in the first edition of "The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, Egypt and Nubia".

1 right
The frontispiece of the first volume of "Egypt and Nubia", published in London in 1846 by Francis Graham Moon, reproduces a particular on the facade of the great rocky temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel.

2 - The famous portrait of David Roberts in oriental clothes was done by Robert Scott in 1840. The clothes, the sword and the belt were among the souvenirs the artist gathered during his long journey in Egypt and the Holy Land

David Roberts, the son of a humble shoemaker, was born on October 24, 1796 in Stockbridge, near Edinburgh. His natural artistic talent manifested quite early and was encouraged by his mother. When little David, impressed by colorful circus placards, covered the walls of the kitchen with processions of animals and other figures expertly drawn in red chalk, his father also noticed his surprising aptitude.

Much as he regretted it, his miserable financial condition did not permit him to send David to school. Roberts, now known as one of the greatest landscape painters of the 19th century, was thus a brilliant self-taught artist, who did not gain all the academic fundamentals necessary for a career as a painter until he was forty years old. With all probability, the only person who ever taught him the rudiments of drawing was a certain Gavin Beugo, a sour, authoritarian decorator whom the family had found through the director of the Trustees Academy of Edinburgh and for whom Roberts worked as an apprentice for seven years.

In 1815 young Roberts moved to Perth, where he got his first paying job as a professional decorator. When he came back to Edinburgh the next year, he was hired as an assistant scenery

painter for a second-rate traveling theater, the Pantheon, which he followed throughout Scotland.

In 1819 he became the official painter for the Theatre Royal of Glasgow and later held the same position for the Theatre Royal of Edinburgh. His 1820 marriage to the Scottish actress Margaret McLachan was short-lived, but Roberts was always an attentive father and was quite close to his only child, Christine, born in 1821.

He was deeply attached to her, and as an adult she returned this affection by reorganizing his work and recopying his travel diaries.

By late 1821 his fame had grown enough to get him a job at the Drury Lane Theatre of London. He was joined by his friend and great rival Clarkson Stanfield, who would also become a famous landscape painter.

In 1824 his first oil painting, a view of the Dryburgh Abbey, was displayed at the British Institution; two years later the artist landed at the prestigious Covent Garden. In the meanwhile, his scenes for the staging of Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* had gained him resounding international success. During this period, one of his *Views of the Rouen Cathedral* was presented to the public of the Royal Academy, and his art began to gain wide critical success. Even the Times expressed its sincere appreciation.

In the meantime, Roberts had become involved in establishing the Society of



3 bottom In the years following the publication of his work, Roberts enjoyed increasing critical and popular success, and many private parties commissioned paintings taken from his lithographs. Some of his illustrious clients included Queen Victoria, the

Countess of Warwick and numerous members of the British aristocracy and upper middle class. Before beginning to paint, Roberts customarily submitted an India ink sketch to the client for approval, similar to the one shown here (depicting the temple of Kom

Ombo), along with technical information, dimensions and the price of the painting. These drafts are of a certain interest because they allow to see how the preparatory drawings the painter sketched on site during his travels must have looked.

British Artists, of which he was elected president in 1831. Despite commitments due to constantly increasing commissions from private buyers, during the early part of his career Roberts made many trips to Europe, each time completing numerous sketches, drawings and watercolors that he would use as subjects for his paintings. In addition to the famous landscapes showing towns and monuments in France, Germany and the Netherlands, he did not neglect to draw his native land, and during his frequent visits to his parents he studied the most glorious vestiges of Scotland, which provided the inspiration for some of his best paintings. One of the results of these explorations was an important series of copper plate etchings which, unfortunately, was never reprinted after the first edition. Encouraged by his growing public success, in 1830 he abandoned his work as a scene painter and restricted his activities to much more lucrative studio work. During this period he also completed a series of drawings commissioned by Sir Bulwer Lytton, entitled *Pilgrims of the Rhine*. In 1832 he decided to visit Spain, a country which at that time was little known, and it proved to be a generous source of inspiration for his creative gifts. During the trip, which lasted nearly two years, Roberts visited almost all the major cities in Spain,

including Madrid, Toledo, Granada, Malaga, Seville and Gibraltar, as well as several areas in Morocco. In the meantime, he tirelessly sketched ruins and monuments from the most disparate periods, with particular attention to Moorish art and the local flamboyant Gothic style. In 1837 a selection of these landscapes appeared under the title of *Picturesque Sketches of Spain*: in only two months he had sold 1,200 copies, which would have made him a small fortune if he had not been defrauded by the publisher. Nevertheless, his experience in Spain provided the basis for a solid international reputation, and was also what put him in contact with Louis Haghe, a young Belgian engraver with enormous talent, even though his right arm was crippled. Roberts entered into a long and profitable relationship with him in the years to come. In addition, thanks to these landscapes Roberts was accepted as a member of the Royal Academy in early 1838. During this period he decided to realize a boyhood dream: collecting all his savings and obtaining detailed information on the customs, traditions and political and social situation of Egypt, Palestine and Syria, in August 1838 he undertook the expedition that would make him famous and consign his name to posterity. Setting off for Paris, he continued along the Rhone Valley to Marseilles, where he arrived on September 11. From there he

boarded a steamship for Civitavecchia. After stopping in Malta and the Cyclades, in late September he finally got off at the port of Alexandria. Roberts had neither the time nor the financial resources to permit him the luxury of delays of any sort, and he was also fully aware that his artistic success, and, in the end, his future, depended on the success of the undertaking. Thus, from Alexandria he headed toward Cairo, and from there toward Abu Simbel without delay, going up the Nile on a rented boat and making only the stops which were absolutely necessary, which generally amounted to the careful measuring of each monument he visited. Only after he safely reached his coveted goal, the fabulous rock temple Ramesses II had carved out in the heart of Nubia, did Roberts return home with a lighter heart, devoting himself to drawing yet never staying too long in any one place. It should be noted that Roberts' documentary work later became particularly valuable, especially with respect to the Nubian temples, which following the construction of the Great Dam of Aswan, opened on January 15, 1971, had to be taken apart and reassembled, often many kilometers away from their original locations. Moreover, many landscapes drawn by the artists have been lost for ever. On December 21 Roberts was in Cairo with over a hundred sketches and

paintings. He stayed in the Egyptian capital for six weeks, during which time he became the first Westerner to be permitted to enter a mosque to draw the interior. In effect, he devoted a great part of his attention to the masterpieces of Islamic architecture, which he had planned to document with the same attention to detail he had shown in sketching the magnificent ruins of pharaonic Egypt. In Cairo, Roberts met Hanafee Ismail Effendi, a young Egyptian who had



Presented to Mr Henry Bicknell
converted to Christianity, who accompanied him during the remainder of his adventure. During the same period Roberts also met two English travelers, John Pell and John Kinnear, and in February 1839 they decided to travel together to the Sinai and then to the legendary Petra and Palestine. Roberts parted company with Kinnear at Gaza and headed to Jerusalem, which he reached by Easter. After



Returning to his homeland in July of 1839, Roberts began searching for a publisher, and only after lengthy negotiations was he satisfied that Francis Graham Moon had sufficient interest in his ambitious project. In order to finance publication of the monumental work, Moon located private subscribers who would receive the

deluxe edition of the lithographs, hand-colored in large format. From 1842 to 1849, based on sketches made on site and assisted by his formidable memory, Roberts produced the drawings which Louis Haghe gradually transformed in prints, published on a monthly basis. The complete work finally produced six in folio volumes containing

247 plates, including the six frontispieces. The first three volumes, dedicated to Queen Victoria and entitled *The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, Egypt and Nubia*, contained the subjects which Roberts had drawn during the second half of his voyage, from the Sinai Peninsula to Beirut. The original comments on the images were by

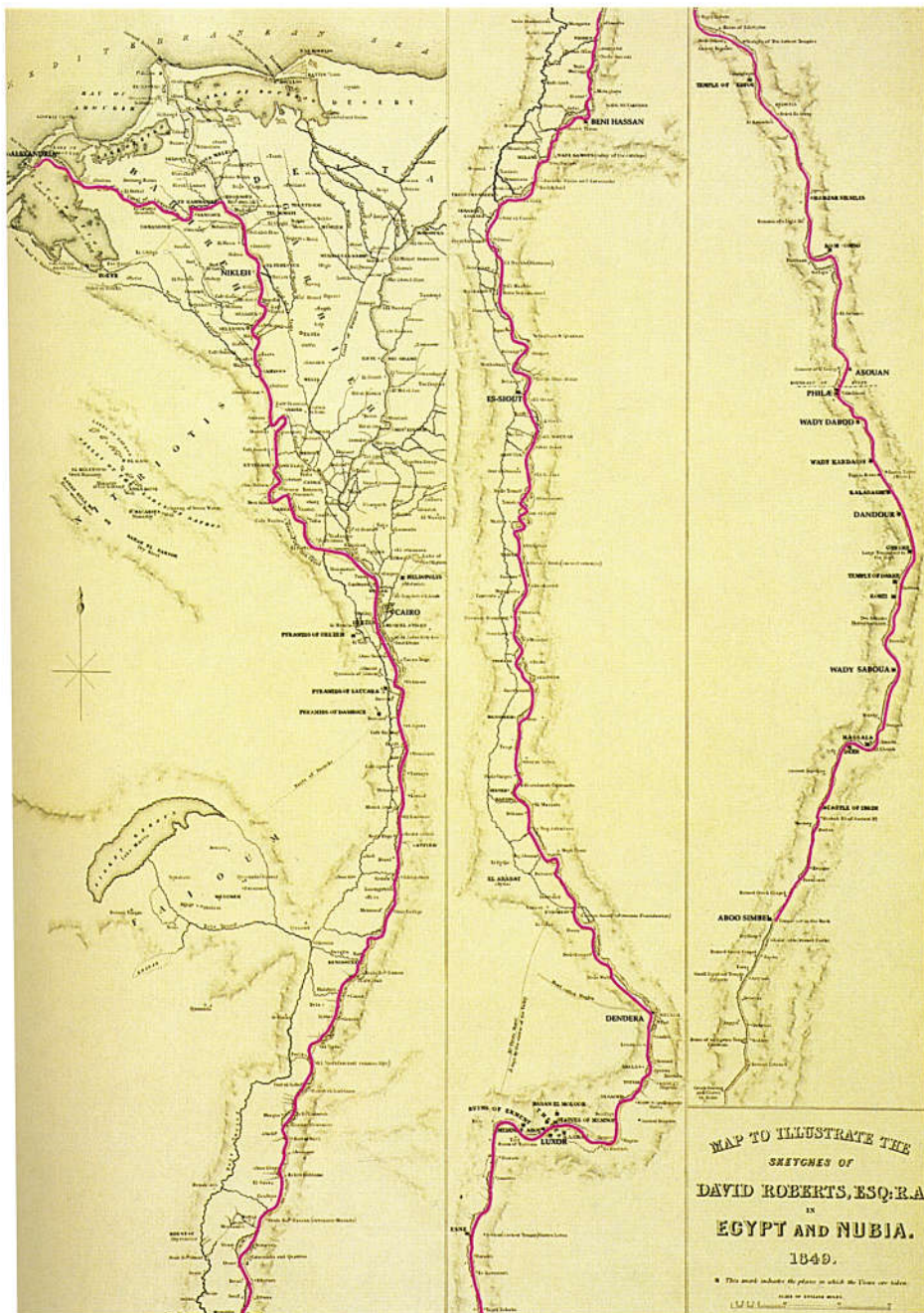
Reverend George Croly. The other three volumes, this time dedicated to Louis-Philippe, the King of France, appeared under the title *Egypt and the mosques of Cairo*; the comment was by William Brockedon. The plates included here refer to Roberts' meeting with

the Pasha of Egypt when, on his return from Beirut, he stopped in Alexandria on May 16, 1839. The informal meeting organized by the English consul in Cairo, Colonel Campbell, lasted about twenty minutes and left an indelible impression on the author. Roberts had no paper or pencil with him and had to reconstruct the scene

from memory. The Pasha, on the left, is seated cross-legged, while his closest assistants are at his back. On the couch to the right are seated Colonel Campbell, Lieutenant Waghorn, Roberts, leaning forward slightly and two English officers.

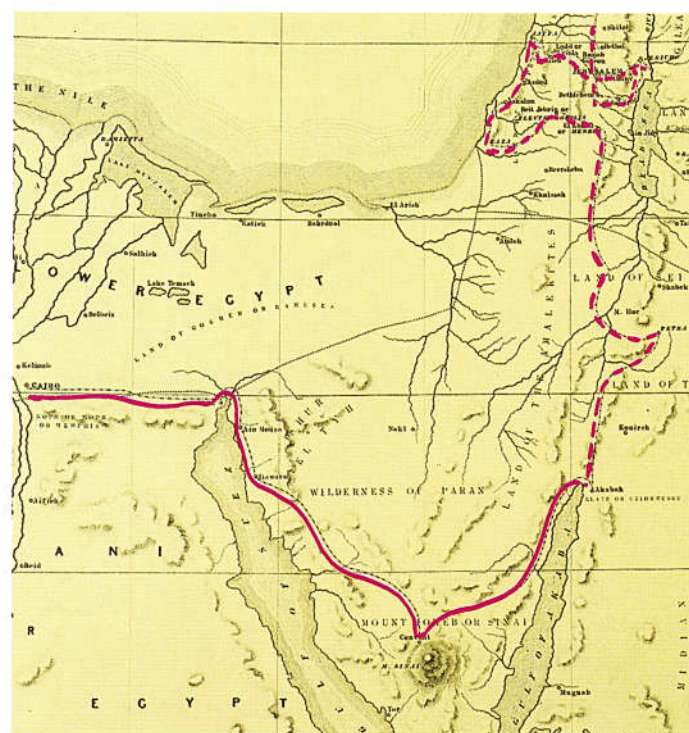
visiting the Jordan Valley and the most important surrounding areas, he continued on north, reaching the Sea of Galilee and the major cities on the Lebanese coast. In Baalbek he caught a persistent fever that unfortunately prevented him from reaching Palmyra and in fact forced him to head for Beirut, where he boarded a ship for England on May 13, 1839. Returning to his native country after an eleven month absence, Roberts submitted the results of his labor to numerous publishers, until he found sufficient interest in Francis Graham Moon. Moon offered him three thousand pounds for the publication of the work and supervised the complex task of engraving the plates. The 247 lithographs, which filled six volumes and were published between 1842 and 1849, were done by Louis Haghe, at the time 34 years old, based on the drawings and observations of Roberts.

The technique the engraver used for the first edition was particularly difficult and time-consuming, as each individual print was done in two-color and then colored by hand. For Roberts, recompense was primarily in terms of fame and glory, as the agreed compensation was very little compared with the enormous amount of work he had done and the discomforts of his voyage. Two years after his return to England, Roberts finally became a true member of the Royal Academy, thanks



to a painting taken from a sketch done at Baalbek. In the two decades to follow, the artist visited numerous European countries, which provided the inspiration for paintings and engravings that enjoyed great success in leading English and foreign galleries. His clients included some of the most influential persons of the period, and many of his friends were famous poets, writers and artists such as Charles Dickens, William Turner and William Thackeray. During his long career he was honored with coveted acknowledgments and awards: among the most prestigious were those from the International Exhibition of Paris in 1855. That same year Roberts became

an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Amsterdam. In 1859 he was in Italy, while he dedicated the following year to a series of oil paintings of the Thames. During his last trips to Belgium and the Netherlands he was accompanied by Christine and Louis Haghe. During this period almost all of his work was done on commission and sold as soon as it was completed, a sign of his continuing fame and excellent financial condition. Surrounded by the affection of his daughter and friends and enjoying critical acclaim, David Roberts died of a heart attack on November 25, 1864 at the age of 68, and was buried in the Norwood cemetery.



The lithographs reproduced in this edition were selected from the 142 plates which depict areas in modern-day Egypt. They were originally published in six volumes edited by Francis Graham Moon. The two maps, which accompanied the original work, show David Roberts' itinerary along the Nile, as well as from Cairo to the Gulf of Aqaba.





PLATE 2 - THE SPHINX





PLATE 4 - THE APPROACH OF THE SIMOON, AT GIZA



View on the Nile looking towards the pyramids of Dahshur and Saqqara.

W. J. M. G. 1841



PLATE 6 - THE FACADE OF THE TEMPLE OF HATHOR AT DENDERA



PLATE 7 - THE INTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE OF DENDERA



PLATE 8 - THE TEMPLE OF DENDERA AND THE TYPHONIUM



PLATE 9 - THE GREAT ENTRY PORTAL TO THE SANCTUARY OF DENDERA





PLATE 11 - VIEW OF THE RUINS OF KARNAK, AT SUNRISE



PLATE 12 - THE GREAT COURTYARD OF KARNAK AND THE COLUMN OF TAHARQA

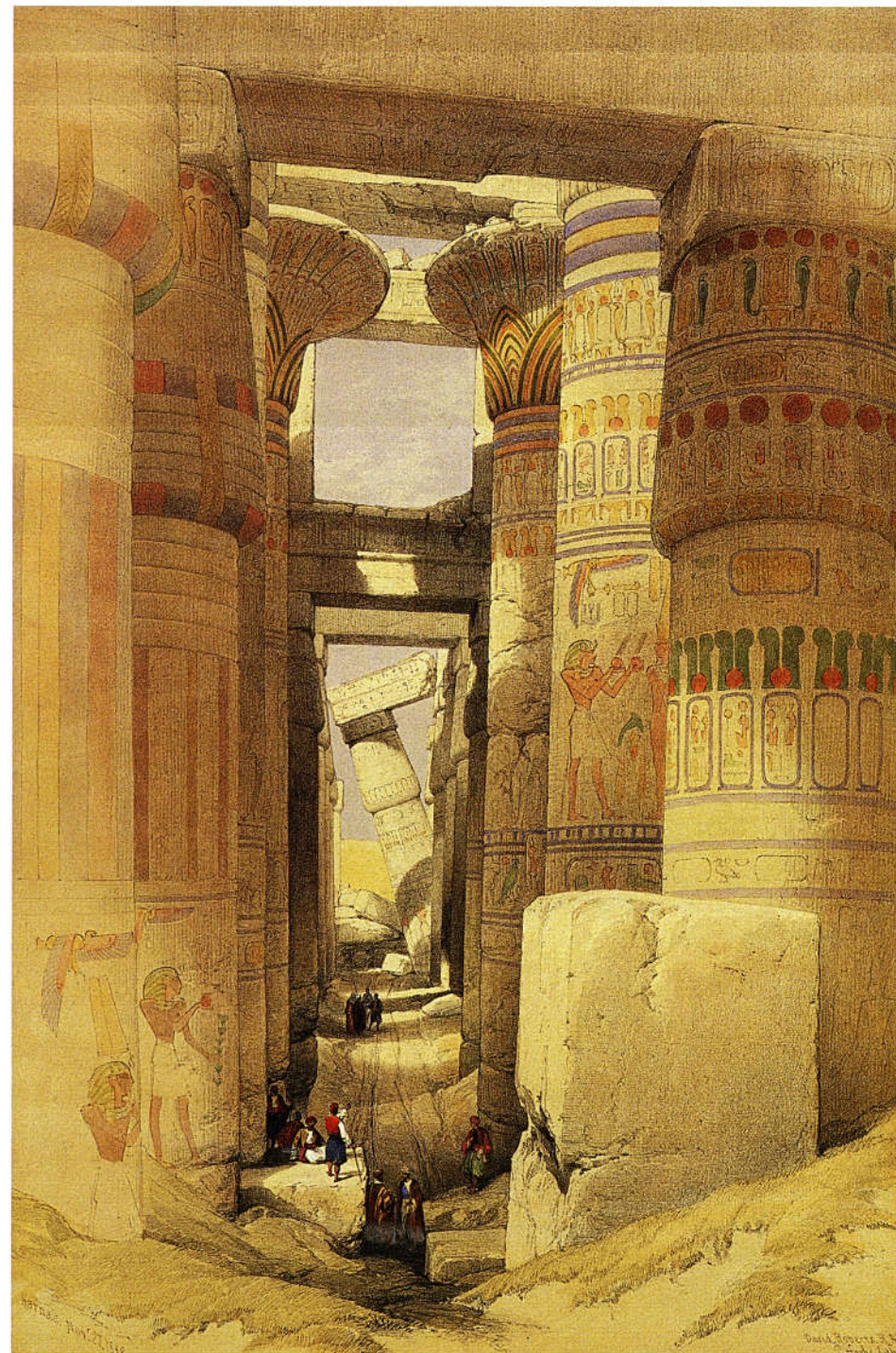


PLATE 13 - THE COLONNADE IN THE GREAT HYPOSTYLE ROOM IN THE TEMP



PLATE 14 - THE CENTRAL NAVE OF THE GREAT HYPOSTYLE ROOM AT KARNAK



PLATE 15 - CROSS VIEW OF THE GREAT HYPOSTYLE ROOM AT KARNAK





PLATE 17 - THE FACADE OF THE GREAT TEMPLE OF AMUN AT LUXOR



PLATE 18 - THE OBELISK OF RAMESSES II AT LUXOR



PLATE 19 - THE COLONNADE OF THE COURTYARD OF AMENOPHIS III AT LUXOR



PLATE 20 - THE WESTERN BANKS OF THE NILE, SEEN FROM LUXOR





PLATE 22 - THE COLOSSI OF MEMNON AT DAWN





PLATE 24 - THE INTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE OF MEDINET HABU



View to the Tombs of the Kings of Thebes. - Robt. M. Wilson.



PLATE 26 - THE INTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE OF ESNA





PLATE 28 - THE PRONAOS OF THE TEMPLE OF EDFU

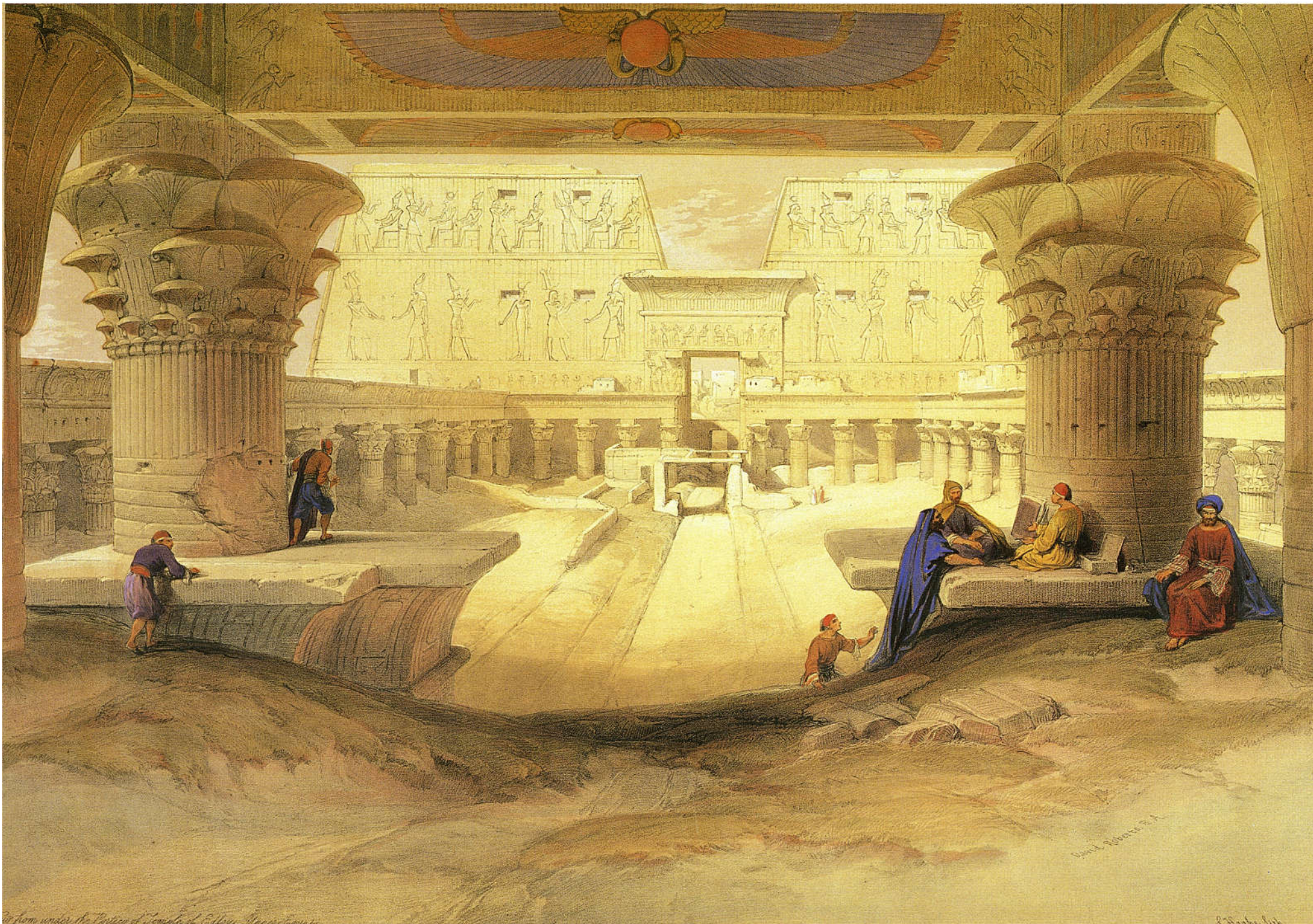




PLATE 30 - THE TEMPLE OF KOM OMBO





PLATE 32 - GENERAL VIEW OF THE ISLAND OF PHILAE



Ruins Temple on the Island of Biggê, Nubia.

David Roberts R.A. - J. S. G. 1848



PLATE 34 - THE GREAT COLONNADE IN FRONT OF THE TEMPLE OF ISIS AT PHILAE



PLATE 35 - THE HYPOSTYLE ROOM IN THE TEMPLE OF ISIS AT PHILAE

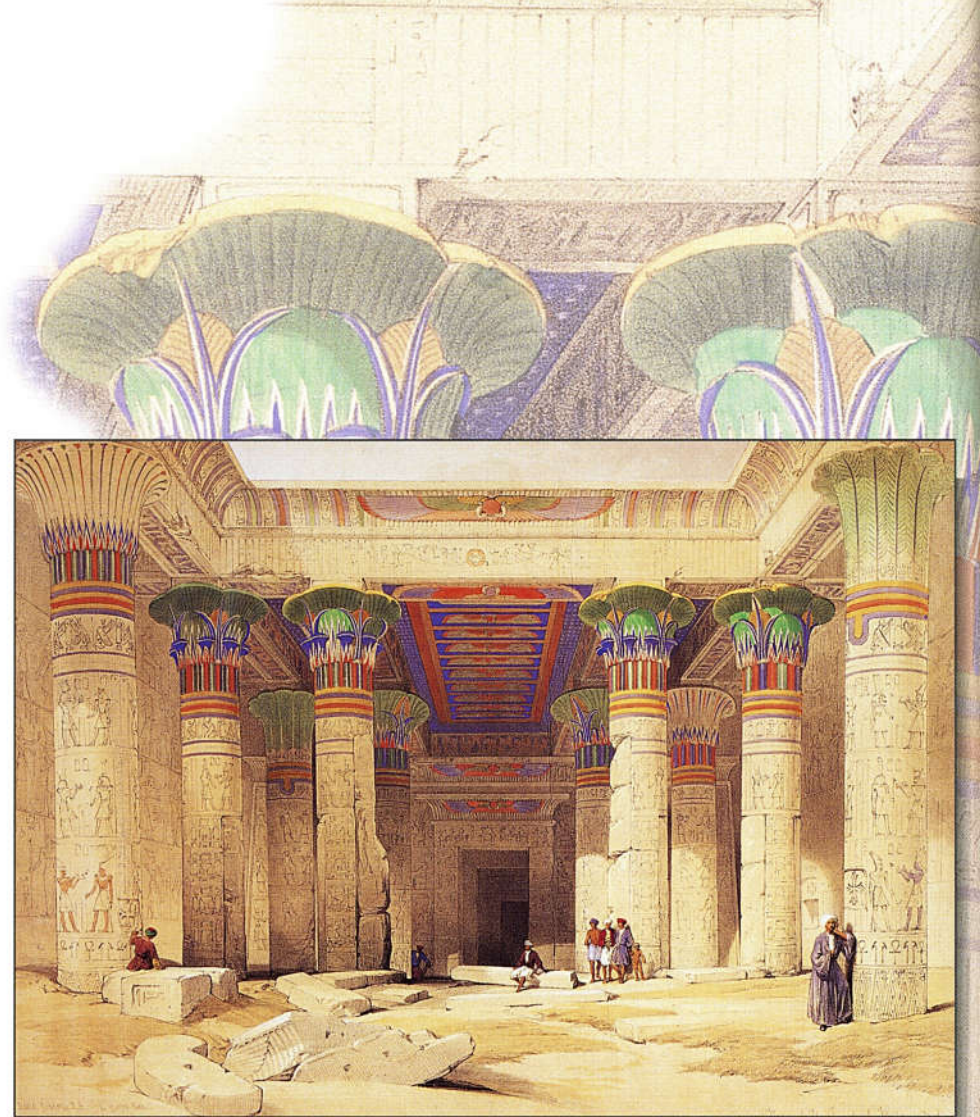


PLATE 36 - THE INTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE OF ISIS AT PHILAE



PLATE 37 - THE TEMPLES OF PHILAE, SEEN FROM THE SOUTH





Remains of the Temple of Kardassy, Naba.

*David Roberts R.A.
Sculp.*





PLATE 41 - THE PRONAOS OF THE TEMPLE OF KALABSHA





PLATE 43 - THE TEMPLE OF WADI MAHARRAKA

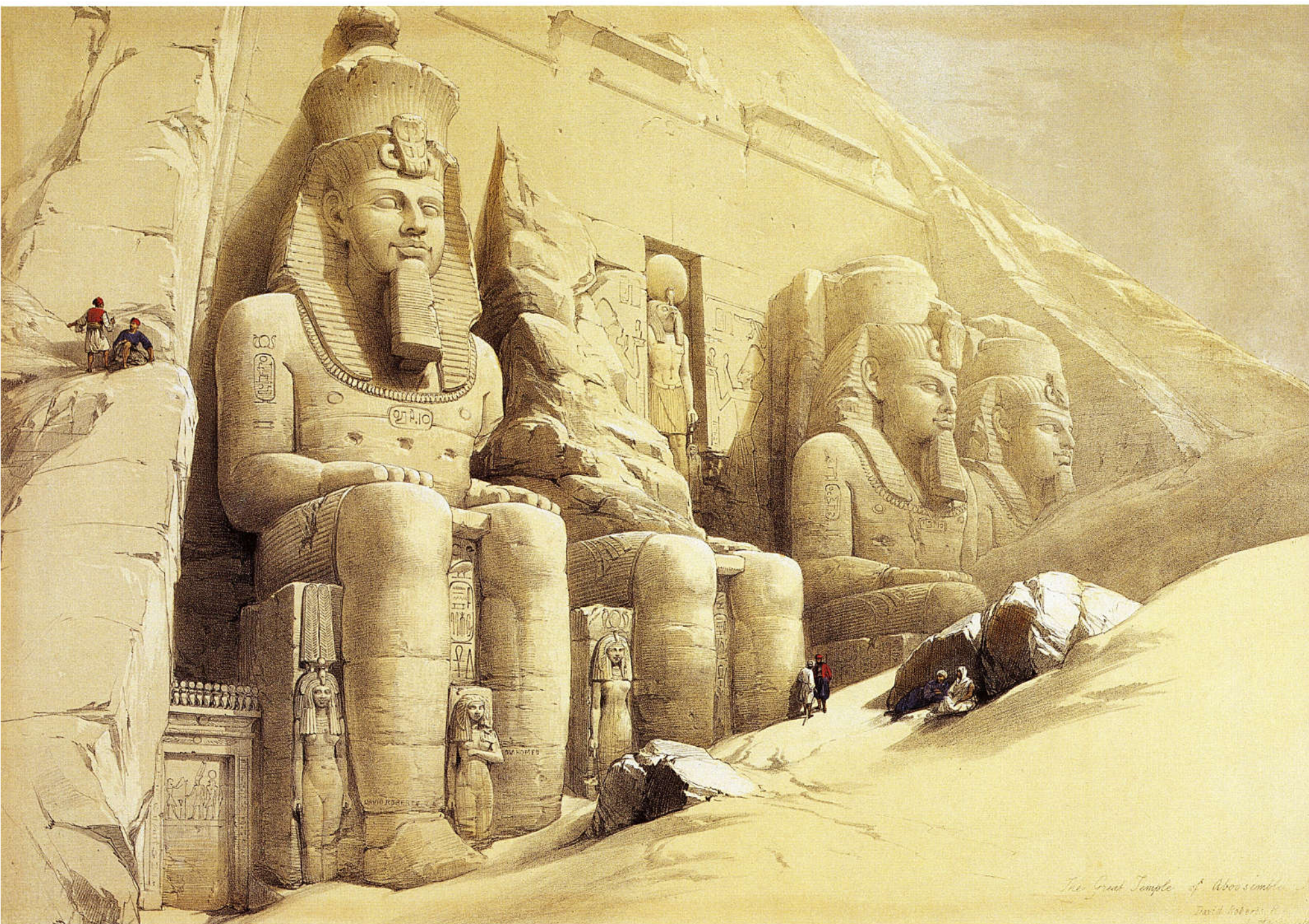




Davies Roberts R.A.
I. Highgate.

Excavated Temples of Abu Simbel, Nubia.

PLATE 45 - THE LANDING-STAGE BY THE TEMPLES OF ABU SIMBEL



The Great Temple of Abou Simbel

David Roberts R.S.A.



PLATE 47 - THE COLOSSI OF RAMESSES II AT ABU SIMBEL





PLATE 51 - BAB ZUWAILAH, SEEN FROM WITHIN THE WALLS

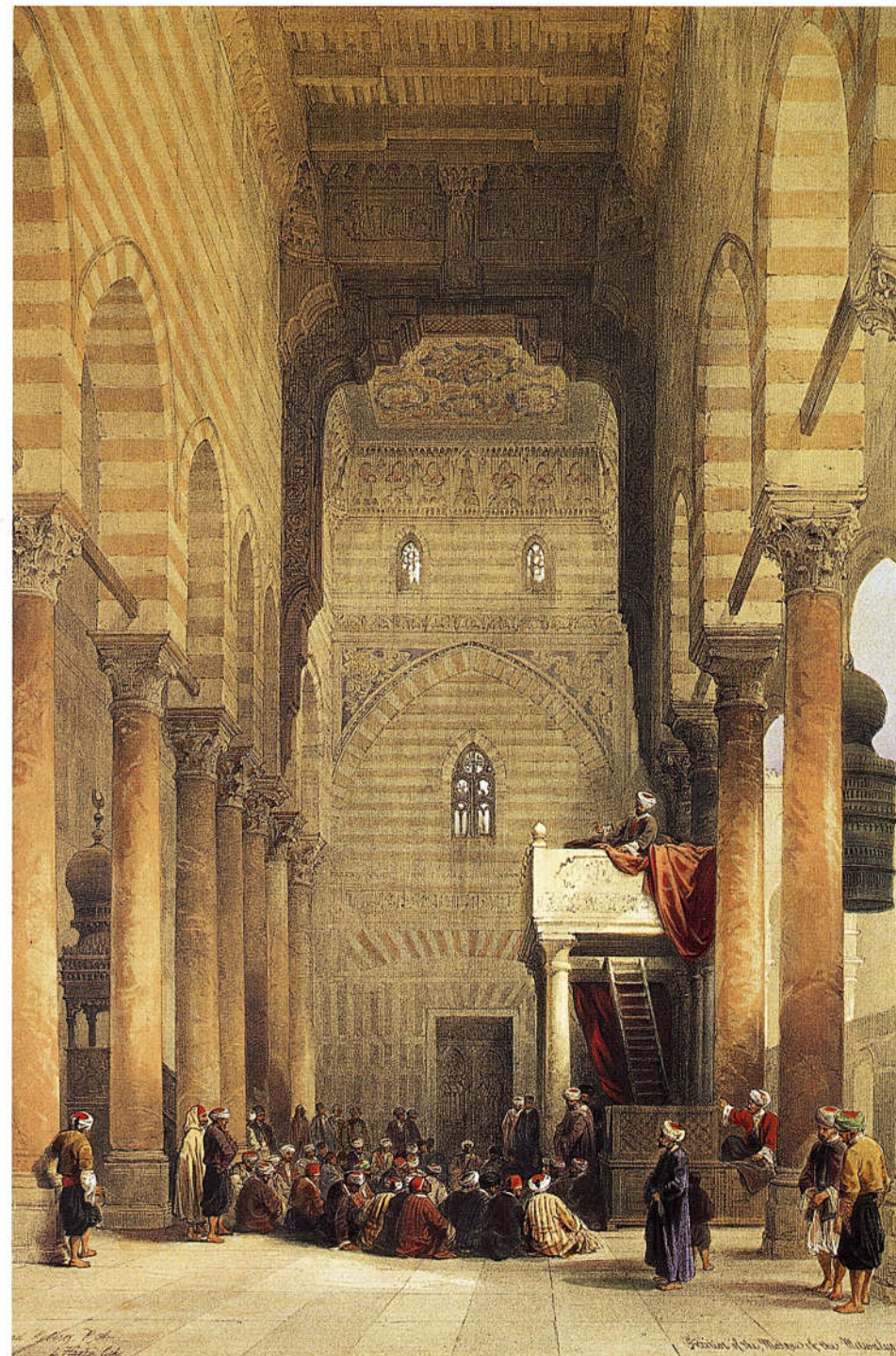


PLATE 52 - THE INTERIOR OF THE MOSQUE OF SULTAN MU'AYYAD

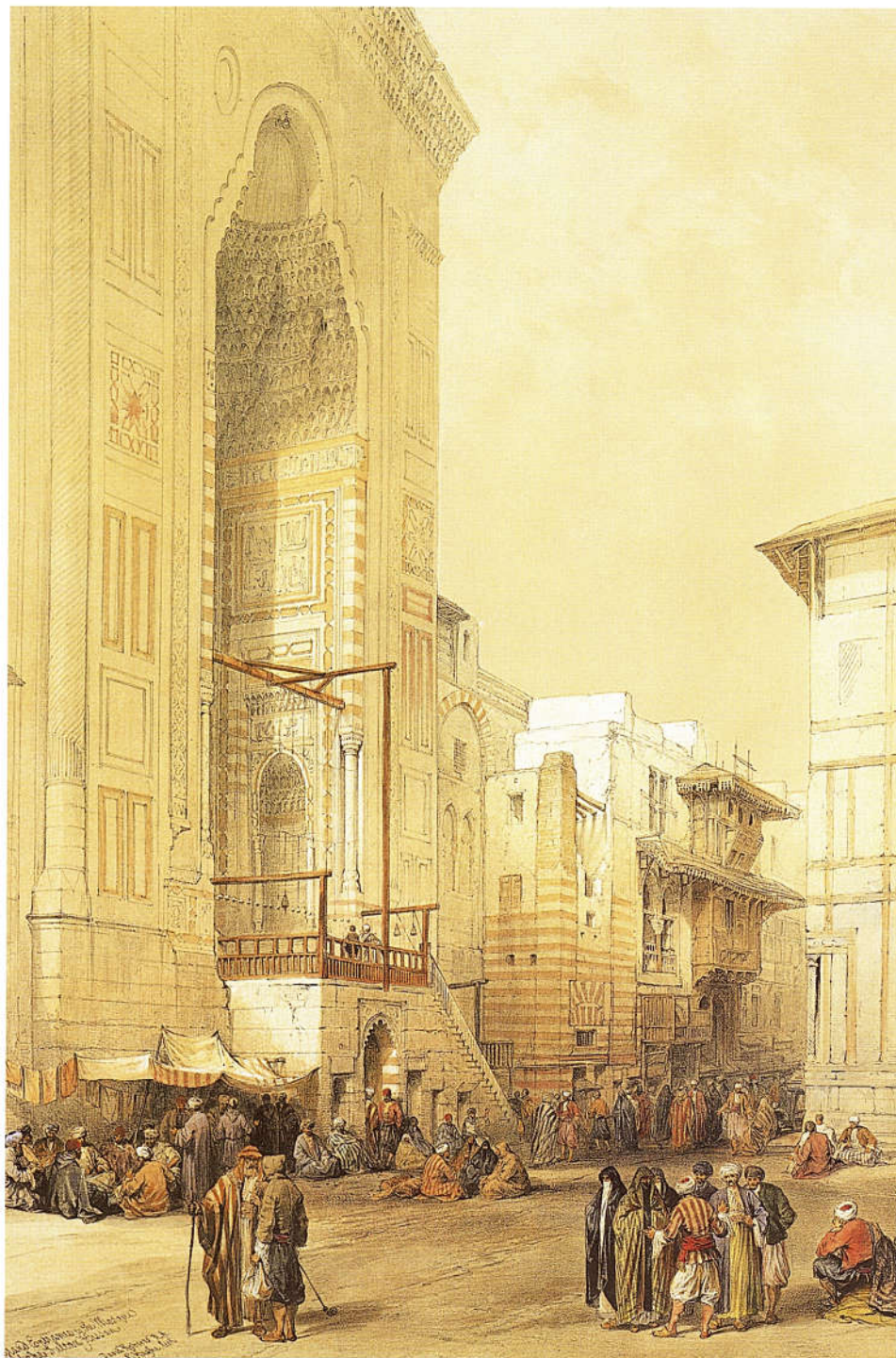


PLATE 53 - THE ENTRY TO THE MOSQUE OF SULTAN HASSAN



PLATE 54 - THE CAIRO CITADEL

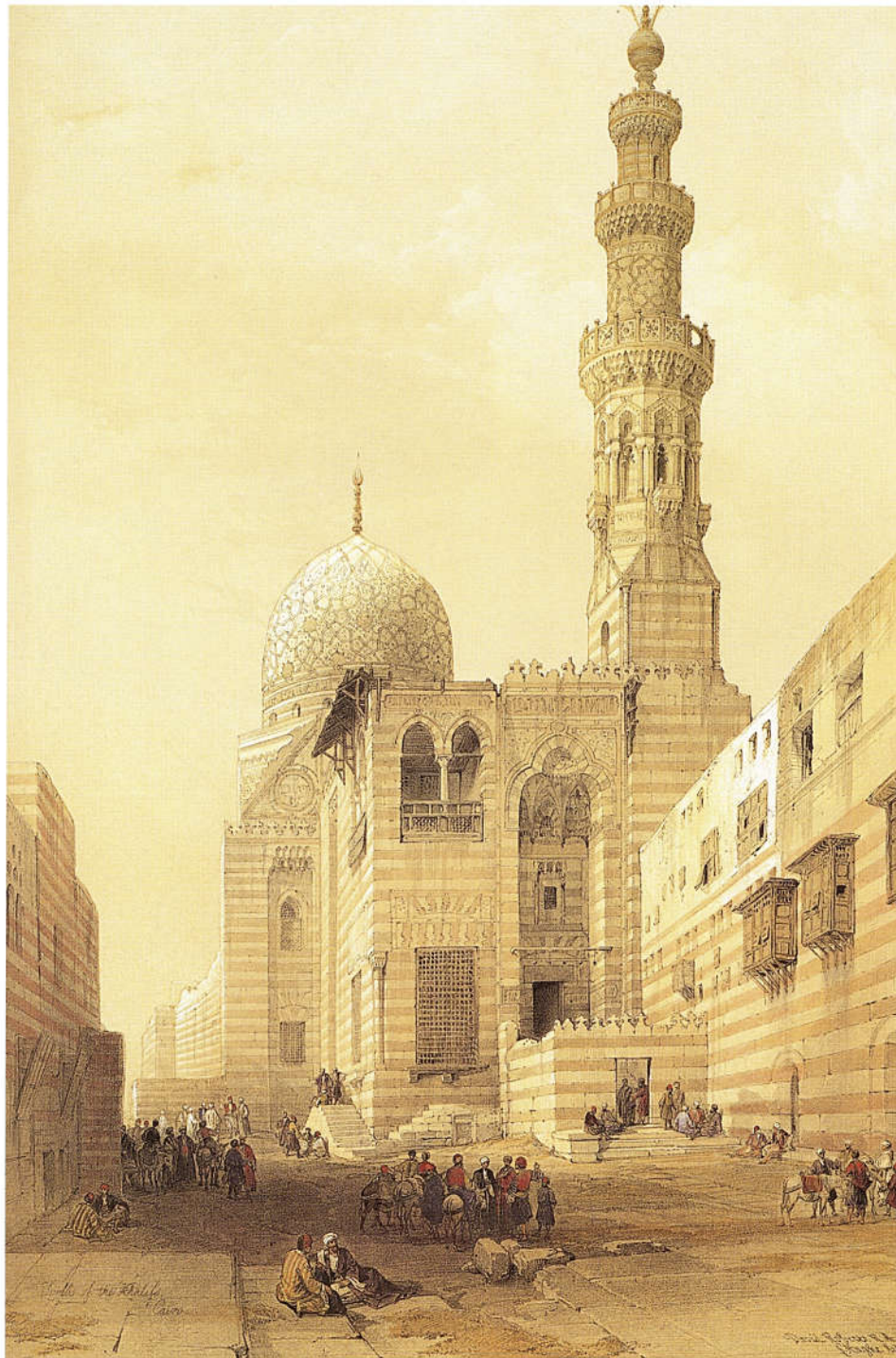


PLATE 55 - THE MOSQUE OF SULTAN AL-ASHRAF QAYTBAY

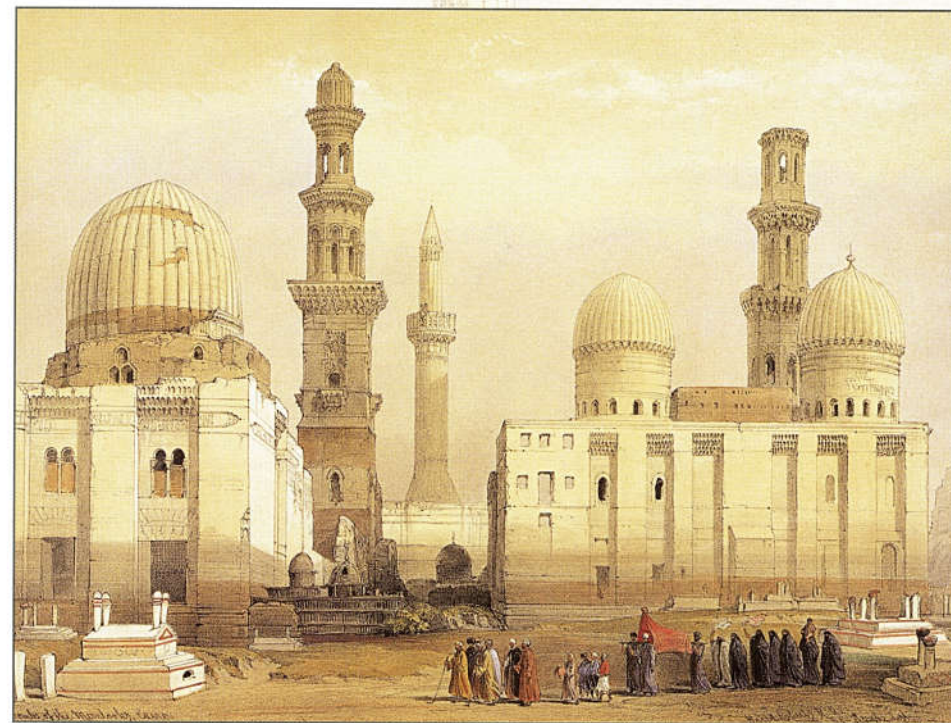


PLATE 56 - THE MAMELUK TOMBS

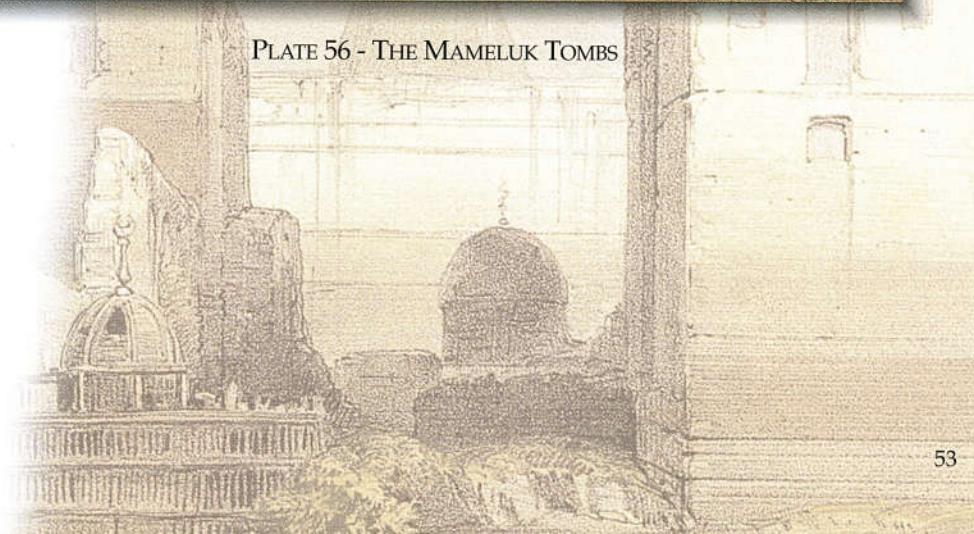






PLATE 58 - THE MONASTERY OF SAINT CATHERINE



PLATE 59 - THE MONASTERY OF SAINT CATHERINE AND MOUNT SINAI

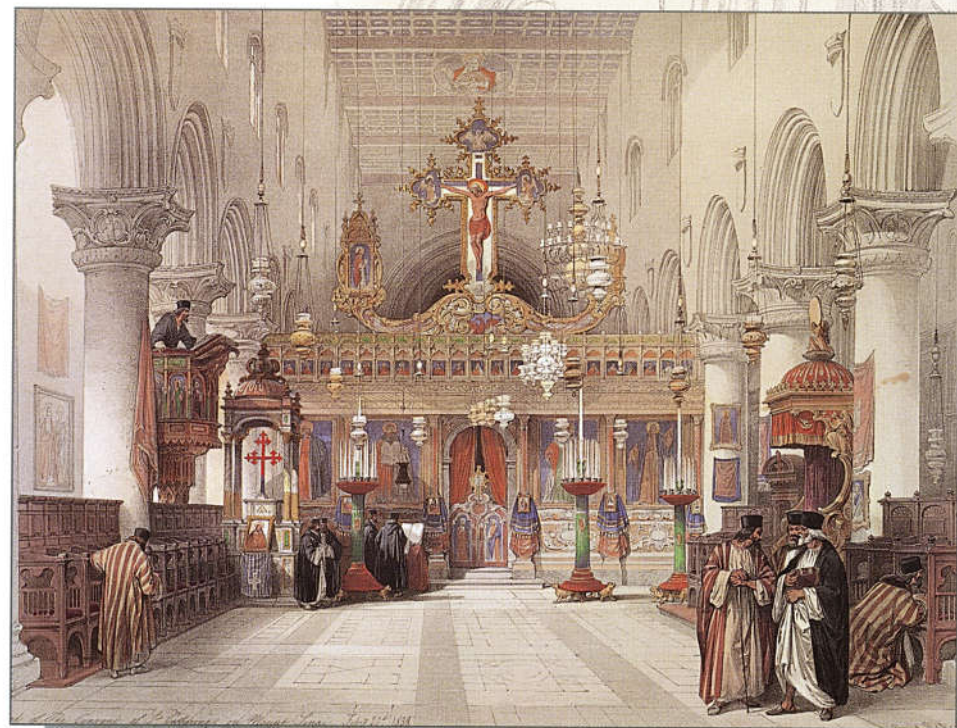


PLATE 60 - THE BASILICA OF THE TRANSFIGURATION





Isle of Cyprus Gulf of Skiaoh — Arabia Petros — 1860 — 1864

David Roberts R.

PLATE 61 - THE ISLAND OF GRAIA

Plate 1 - Page 6

The pyramids of Cheops and Chephren

Our ideal trip along the banks of the Nile begins at the pyramids of Giza, which Roberts visited for the first time on October 3, 1838, and which he then explored more thoroughly on January 17 of the following year, after he had returned to Cairo following his long and adventurous trip down the river that led him to Abu Simbel.

The lithograph shows the astonishing proportions of the two largest pyramids, both of which date back to the Fourth Dynasty (2584-2465 BCE); in particular, the pyramid of Cheops (to the right) is over two and a half million cubic meters in size, larger than any other edifice built in ancient times. Indeed, its original height of 147 meters remained unequaled until the bell towers of the Gothic cathedral of Cologne were built, almost four thousand years later.

Plate 2 - Page 7

The Sphinx

Because of its menacing appearance, the Sphinx, which stands before the eastern wall of the pyramid of Chephren, was known to the Arabs as Abu el-Hol, or "the Father of Terror." The enormous simulacrum with its leonine form was carved from a spur of limestone, originally used as a construction quarry, while blocks of stone were brought in to make the paws and tail.

The colossus, 20 meters high and 73 meters long, reproduces the features of the pharaoh Chephren, depicted as the living image of the sun god and guardian of the necropolis of Giza.

Plate 3 - Page 3

The Sphinx, front view

As can be seen in the lithograph, for a long time the Sphinx's face was the only part that emerged from the sand.

About five meters high, it still shows traces of color, which were more evident to Roberts than they are today.

Plate 4 - Page 9

The approach of the Simoon, at Giza

This landscape is a sort of tribute to the mysterious fascination of ancient Egypt, and of the Sphinx in particular. Here, Roberts describes being overcome by a violent sandstorm blown in by the Simoon, a warm, dry wind which sometimes explodes with extreme violence. The Scottish artist nevertheless permitted himself some poetic license, as the Sphinx actually faces the rising sun, while here it is pictured facing west, with the sun setting to the south.

Plate 5 - Page 10

The Nile, near the pyramids of Dahshur and Saqqara

In the lithograph to the left one can see the Bent Pyramid and the Red Pyramid, both built at Dahshur around 2750 BC by the pharaoh Snefru; the southern pyramids of the necropolis of Saqqara can be glimpsed on the horizon. The boat in the foreground was transporting a cargo of Nubian and Abyssinian slaves destined for the Cairo market. Roberts, who drew the preliminary sketch for this plate on December 20, 1838, was disgusted by the practice of slavery, and his contempt is often expressed in his writings.

Plate 6 - Page 11

The facade of the temple of Hathor at Dendera

Roberts came to Dendera the first time on October 19, 1838, and stayed there again from December 6-8. This area, originally known as Tentyris, was one of the most important religious centers of ancient Egypt. The famous temple dedicated to the goddess Hathor, from the late Ptolemaic and Roman period, is unique due to the absence of a pylon, a typical element of Egyptian religious architecture. Instead, the front of the edifice is formed by an imposing structure 42 meters wide and 18 meters high, with a facade with six columns, on which rests an imposing

cornice. The bottom half of the intercolumns is filled with hieroglyphs and bas-reliefs, while the entry is in the center, forming a high empty space wider than those adjacent.

Plate 7 - Page 12

The interior of the temple of Dendera

This lithograph shows the interior of the first hypostyle room of the temple, a magnificent chamber twenty-five meters deep and adorned with eighteen enormous columns covered with bas-reliefs. All the columns bore images of the goddess of the place, the lady of love and music. Unfortunately, when the temple was converted into a church, Coptic monks disfigured her features in an attempt to erase all signs of the Pagan religion.

Plate 8 - Page 12

The temple of Dendera and the Typhomium

Inside the sacred enclosure of the temple are two mammisi, one from the Ptolemaic period and the other Roman. The latter (in the foreground of the lithograph) was in the past erroneously referred to as the Thyphonium, as the figures of the god Bes which adorn the blocks above the capitals were thought to be effigies of the mythical Typhon. Mammisi, which means "birth sanctuary," are small temples typical of the Late Period in which the progeny of the pharaohs was honored under the pretext of venerating the birth of the gods: the pharaoh's children, considered to be living deities, had to be born within the temple's sanctuary.

Plate 9 - Page 13

The great entry portal to the sanctuary of Dendera

Built by Ptolemy IX Soter II, the temple of Dendera is situated in the center of a vast area enclosed by a wall of unfired brick, now almost completely in ruins, whose sides measure between 280 and 300 meters in length. On the northern and southern sides

are two magnificent portals built during the period of Roman domination. Roberts drew the one facing east, which was the best preserved. As can be seen in the lithograph, at the time the structure was for the most part buried, as were the temple of Hathor and the other buildings which surround it.

Plate 10 - Page 14

View of the temples of Karnak, from the south

Roberts stayed at Karnak on November 26-29, 1838. Here, on the plain that extends through a wide loop in the Nile, one of the greatest religious and political centers of the ancient world developed in the second millennium BC: Thebes, a city so rich and influential that, at the height of its power, it contained an astounding population of 500,000 inhabitants. In this immense metropolis, which served as the capital of Egypt several times during the Middle and New Kingdoms, the god Amun, associated with Mut and Khonsu in the so-called Theban Triad, was venerated with great pomp and ceremony. The enormous religious complex of Karnak, founded during the Twelfth Dynasty (1955-1750 BC) is not based on a single plan, as for over sixteen centuries the pharaohs competed with each other to add increasingly ambitious extensions and embellishments.

Plate 11 - Page 15

View of the ruins of Karnak, at sunrise

This splendid landscape shows the great temple of Karnak in its entirety. From left to right, one can see the first pylon, the Taharka column, the remains of the second pylon, the colonnade of the great hypostyle room, the obelisk of Tuthmosis and that of Queen Hatshepsut, the festival hall of Tuthmosis III and the Nectanebo I portal. The view is especially designed to set off the enormous length of the sanctuary, which, with its thirty hectares of surface area, is indeed the largest columned temple in the world.

Plate 12 - Page 16**The great courtyard of Karnak and the column of Taharqa**

Beyond the first pylon - a structure consisting of two large trapezoidal towers framed by a portal, typical of Egyptian architecture - is the great courtyard, the largest of all Egyptian temples. Built during the Twenty-Second Dynasty (945-745 BC), 18 columns run along its left side and 9 columns along the right, all in the form of closed papyrus. In the center of the vast area is a column 21 meters high, the only one surviving from a kiosk built by the Ethiopian king Taharqa around 680 BC.

Plate 13 - Page 16**The colonnade in the great hypostyle room in the temple of Karnak**

This lithograph shows a view of the great hypostyle room in the temple of Amun. Built by Sethos I and Ramesses II, it may rightfully be considered one of the wonders of the ancient world. Covering an overall surface area 5,000 square meters in size, it has 134 sandstone columns arranged in 16 rows; the twelve that delimit the central nave, shown in this plate, are over 24 meters high and surmounted by capitals with a maximum circumference of over 15 meters.

Plate 14 - Page 17**The central nave of the great hypostyle room at Karnak**

The great hypostyle room of the temple of Karnak, the largest room in the world, covered with monolithic slabs, has been described as "a forest of columns." The difference in height between the central columns and those in the side aisles made it possible to construct numerous windows between the architraves and the ceiling, thus providing illumination for the room, which is closed off on all sides by high walls. One of these windows can be seen in the upper left corner of the lithograph. In the background is the obelisk of Tuthmosis I, the only one

surviving of the four obelisks which the powerful pharaoh erected in the courtyard between the third and fourth pylons.

Plate 15 - Page 17**Cross view of the great hypostyle room at Karnak**

Inside the temple, and in particular in the hypostyle room, all surfaces are abundantly decorated with bas-reliefs and inscriptions which describe the complex liturgical rituals and relationships among the sovereigns and the gods. Unfortunately, in many areas the bright colors Roberts reproduced have faded or even vanished.

Plate 16 - Page 18**The temple of Luxor, as seen from the Nile**

The temple of Luxor was the principal satellite of the enormous religious complex of Karnak, to which Nectanebo I connected it by means of a three kilometer long avenue of human-headed sphinxes. In this plate, looking from left to right, it is quite easy to see the various elements which constitute the enormous structure: the pylon of Ramesses II, preceded by the obelisk and colossal effigies of the pharaoh, the first courtyard, partially occupied by the Abu el-Haggag mosque, the great colonnade (in the center of the picture) and the second porticoed courtyard, and finally the hypostyle room and the true naos, here partially occupied by some miserable mud huts. Roberts stayed in Luxor on October 23, when he did the sketch for this lithograph, and then again on December 1 on his return from Abu Simbel, when he did the other drawings.

Plate 17 - Page 19**The facade of the great temple of Amun at Luxor**

Just three pharaohs are responsible for the construction of the temple of Luxor: Amenophis III, Tutankhamun and Ramesses II. In the 14th century BC, Amenophis

appointed Amenhotep, the son of Hapy, famous for his wisdom and venerated as a god after his death, as architect. Amenhotep aligned it from north to south to connect it directly to the abode of Amun at Karnak. As was customary, the two succeeding pharaohs enlarged it, utilizing the traditional repetition of the same structural elements. The great front pylon is the work of Ramesses II, who adorned its facade with relief work depicting his victory against the Hittites in the battle of Qadesh.

Plate 18 - Page 20**The obelisk of Ramesses II at Luxor**

Ramesses II erected two obelisks before the pylon of the temple and covered them with propitiatory inscriptions and scenes of offerings to Amun.

In the 19th century these monoliths were donated to France by the Pasha of Egypt, Mohammed Ali. The western one, over 22 meters tall and weighing 220 tons, was brought to Paris and was erected by the engineer Jean Baptiste Lebas on October 25, 1836, in the middle of the Place de la Concorde, while the northern one remained where it was.

France officially gave up its claim to ownership in 1980.

Plate 19 - Page 20**The colonnade of the courtyard of Amenophis III at Luxor**

The lithograph shows a view of the columned courtyard of Amenophis III, a vast open area 51 meters wide and 45 meters long, surrounded on three sides by two rows of fascicular columns with closed capitals. The temple of Luxor, whose name was Ipet-resit, or "Amun's southern harem," was the earthly abode of the goddess Mut, to which the simulacrum of Amun was brought each year in a visit to Karnak to celebrate the mystical and fleshly union that would fecundate the world and make Egypt fertile for the next twelve months.

Plate 20 - Page 21**The western banks of the Nile, seen from Luxor**

In order to draw this picture, Roberts had to scale one of the architraves of the colonnade which surrounds the courtyard of Ramesses II. From this position, he had a full view of the verdant plain on the western bank of the Nile, where the pharaohs of the New Kingdom had built their funerary temples. From left to right are the temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, the solitary figures of the Colossi of Memnon, the Ramesseum and the temple of Sethos I, behind which is the Valley of the Kings, where 62 royal tombs have so far been rescued from centuries of oblivion.

Plate 21 - Page 22**The Colossi of Memnon seen from the southwest**

Roberts spent the entire day of December 4, 1838 drawing the Colossi of Memnon from various angles. These enormous twin statues, almost 20 meters high, are all that remains of the funeral temple of Amenophis III, the largest temple in western Thebes. Located far to the east in the Nile's alluvial plain, the building was constructed mostly of unfired brick and was probably destroyed by the river's annual floods. Reduced to a heap of rubble, it was then utilized as a quarry for construction materials. The two statues, which depicted the deified Amenophis III, are sculpted in extremely hard sandstone and have survived continuous erosion to this day.

Plate 22 - Page**The Colossi of Memnon at dawn**

Baptized the "Colossi of Memnon" by Greek travelers due to an error in interpreting the Egyptian name, both of these enormous statues were damaged by an earthquake in 27 BC. Thereafter, the northernmost statue began to emit a distinctive lament when heated by the rays of the rising sun. This increased the popularity of the colossi and created the Ptolemaic-era legend that the

Homeric hero Memnon, killed by Achilles below the walls of Troy, resided within them, and that each morning his simulacrum moaned softly when caressed by his mother Aurora. Unfortunately, the phenomenon ceased when Septimus Severus restored the upper portion of the colossus.

Plate 23 - Page 24
The colossus of Ramesses II in the Ramesseum

The remains of the so-called Ramesseum, the enormous temple built by Ramesses II, still stand in the Theban plain. The fragments of the large statue that depicted the pharaoh seated on his throne, his head covered by the double crown of Lower and Upper Egypt, rise up out of the ruins. Located in front of the second pylon of the temple and created out of a single block of red Aswan granite weighing over a thousand tons, it was originally a little under 18 meters tall. The colossus inspired Shelley to write his famous sonnet *Ozymandias*, a name derived from the Greek translation of the first name of Ramesses II, Usermaatra, or "Powerful is the Truth of Re." To the left of the enormous bust stand four Osirian pillars and two columns surviving from the portico that ran around the second courtyard of the temple; the remains of the first pylon can be seen in the background.

Plate 24 - Page 25
The interior of the temple of Medinet Abu

Not far from the Ramesseum, at Medinet Habu, are the spectacular ruins of the funeral temple built by Ramesses III. The edifice, considered one of the stylistically most perfect feats of Egyptian architecture, was converted into a church after the emperor Theodosius proclaimed Christianity the only religion permitted under the Roman Empire, and at Medinet Abu the sanctuary even became the center of a great Coptic village/monastery.

The nave and aisles of the basilica erected within the second courtyard of the temple were held up by porphyry columns surmounted by Corinthian capitals, which Roberts sketched on site and which were removed during subsequent excavation campaigns. The preliminary sketch for this plate was done on December 5, 1838, as was the sketch for the previous plate.

Plate 25 - Page 26
The Valley of the Kings

Surrounded by high rocky walls, the Valley of the Kings winds sinuously on undulating ground along the foot of Mount el-Qurn, also known as the Theban Peak, with its pyramid-shaped form. Here are the tombs of the sovereigns from the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties, dug into the limestone rock. Unfortunately, the magnificent hypogea were profaned and looted of their rich funerary trappings as early as pharaonic times: the only tomb which had never been violated was that of Tutankhamun, which was brought to light along with its fabulous treasure by Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon in 1922. Roberts visited the Valley on October 22 and sketched it on December 3.

Plate 26 - Page 27
The interior of the temple of Esna

In its present form, the temple of Esna dates back to the reconstruction ordered by Ptolemy IV Philometor in 181 BC.

The edifice consisted of the pronaos, or hypostyle room, two vestibules, the cella and two antechambers connected by corridors; the hypostyle room, completed around the second half of the 1st century AD under the emperors Tiberius, Claudius and Vespasian, is the only structure which has survived intact over the centuries. This temple, dedicated to the generating god Khnum, is unique due to the fact that it is entirely covered by relief work. Roberts visited it on October 25, 1838.

Plate 27 - Page 28
The temple of Edfu

One hundred and thirty-seven meters long, 79 meters wide and 26 meters high at the top of the portal, Edfu is the second largest religious complex in Egypt, after the great temple of Amun at Karnak. It is also the one which has suffered the least damage. The enormous complex, begun in 237 BC by Ptolemy III Euergetes, was concluded 180 years later by Ptolemy XIII. In this plate, Roberts, who visited the site for the first time on October 26, 1838 and then stayed there on November 22-23, shows the magnificent pylon: although the imposing molding that crowned the top has been destroyed, its current height is still 37 and a half meters.

Plate 28 - Page 29
The pronaos of the temple of Edfu

The pronaos, which is connected to the great courtyard by six columns, may be the most spectacular part of the temple. It is a good example of the Ptolemaic taste for capitals with complicated designs: the two nearest the gate are lotus-shaped, those in the middle are adorned with date palm leaves, and those on the outside draw their inspiration from the crown of Hyphaene thebaica, a palm typical of the region. Inside, twelve more columns arranged in pairs support the ceiling: here as well, the capitals are decorated in the most disparate styles.

Plate 29 - Page 30
The pylon of the temple of Edfu, seen from the pronaos

This splendid picture provides a sweeping view of the great courtyard, surrounded by a portico with columns that end in elaborate capitals with floral motifs, and of the back face of the pylon.

The great bas-reliefs which decorate the walls show Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos as he makes offerings to the local deities: Horus, Hathor and their son Ihy. The winged solar disk, symbol of the patron

god of Edfu, is clearly visible on the jambs of the portal, and also appears on the architrave of the pronaos.

Plate 30 - Page 31
The temple of Kom Ombo

Roberts first saw Kom Ombo on November 21, 1838. The imposing ruins of a temple built in 204 BC still stand in this area, on a hill that dominates the course of the Nile. Ordered by Ptolemy V, work went on for more than 90 years, but the masonry structures could be considered complete only by the era of Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos, a century and a half after work had begun. The porticoed courtyard was then completed by the Roman emperor Tiberius, while a few other additions and decorations were added by Domitianus at the end of the first century of the Christian era.

Plate 31 - Page 32
The pronaos of the temple of Kom Ombo

Kom Ombo is the only double temple in all of Egypt. Egyptian sanctuaries were actually almost always consecrated to more than one god, but generally the simulacrum of the main deity occupied the central naos, while those of secondary deities were located in the side chapels. This is the only temple divided into two parts, separated by an imaginary longitudinal line, with the portion on the right dedicated to Sobek, associated in triad with Hathor and Khonsu, and that on the left to Haroeris, accompanied by Senetnefret and Panebtawy. The structure was thus comprised of two identical, adjacent sectors, each independent of the other for religious needs.

Plate 32 - Page 33
General view of the island of Philae
 This magnificent picture shows the entire enormous complex from the top of the nearby island of Biggè. To the far right of the picture is the kiosk of Nectanebo and the nearby

obelisk, both dating from the 4th century BC. Before them are the two wings of the colonnade built by Augustus. Adjacent to the first pylon is the portal of Ptolemy II, the remains of an older structure. In the background is the great kiosk of Trajan. Between the two pylons is a vast courtyard; the side facing the river is closed off by a *mammisi*, which is visible from the back face. On the wharf in front of it, facing the Nile, is the great portal of Hadrian. Finally, behind the second pylon is the actual temple, consisting of an atrium and a naos, surrounded by several secondary rooms. Roberts visited Philae between October 30 and November 1 and on November 17-19.

Plate 33 - Page 34

The ruins of a small temple on the island of Biggè

In ancient times no one except for priests from nearby Philae could set foot on the island of Biggè, sacred to Hathor and the fire goddess Ups. Here, in fact, is the famous Abaton, the tomb of Osiris, located in the middle of a sacred grove, surrounded by 365 small altars. As early as the Eighteenth Dynasty a sanctuary had been built on Biggè, and was then reconstructed around 245 BC by Ptolemy III Euergetes. This building was further expanded by Ptolemy XIII, who built a large entry portal to which an arch was later added, with a stairway that led from the wharf on the Nile to the temple.

Plate 34 - Page 35

The great colonnade in front of the temple of Isis at Philae

Isis, the daughter of the sun god Re and wife and sister of Osiris, the creator mother goddess and protector of the dead, held a privileged position in the Egyptian pantheon, as she knew powerful spells. During the Ptolemaic and Roman eras the cult of Isis grew rapidly, and the sanctuary on the island of Philae, located not far above the First Cataract of the Nile, reached the apex

of its splendor. The lame and the sick came here from all over the country and the various provinces of the Empire, hoping for a favor from the goddess. Most of the structures which make up the complex date from this period, including the two colonnades which precede the first pylon of the temple. In the western one, which is about 100 meters long, numerous bas-reliefs portray Augustus, Nero and Tiberius.

Plate 35 - Page 36

The hypostyle room in the temple of Isis at Philae

Within the hypostyle room, all surfaces are literally covered with bas-reliefs, a temple painted in bright colors. Everywhere, pharaohs and deities endlessly repeat their hieratic gestures, while the immense columns almost seem to blossom in the glorious array of forms and colors in the capitals, which seem to effortlessly support the massive trabeations along which sail the sacred ships. The figures of great vultures with outspread wings, repeated in long rows, stand out on the ceilings, painted like starry skies. The illustration clearly shows a number of Coptic crosses carved in the shafts of the columns, as well as the remains of an altar, testimony to the conversion of the temple into a Christian church in the 4th century.

Plate 36 - Page 37

The interior of the temple of Isis at Philae

The lithograph shows the hypostyle room of the actual temple of Isis, located beyond the second pylon, which is smaller than the first one. This room, with eight columns supporting the ceiling, is preceded by a courtyard on whose short sides are two brief porticoes, each one supported by a central column, and which are two extensions of the hypostyle room. A number of vestibules and the naos follow, surrounded by various minor rooms. Unfortunately, the long period spent in the

waters of the reservoir has almost completely destroyed the elegant colors the artist reproduced here.

Plate 37 - Page 37

The temples of Philae, seen from the south

Roberts' lithographs show us how the island of Philae and its monuments, unchanged until the end of the last century, when the first Aswan Dam was begun, must have appeared for centuries. Already half-submerged by the waters of the reservoir, the temples risked destruction following the construction of the High Dam, built by President Nasser in the early 1960's. Fortunately, as part of UNESCO's campaign to save the Nubian monuments, the sanctuary was dismantled into 37,363 blocks and fully reconstructed on the nearby island of Agilkia, which is several meters higher. The work, which was performed by an Italian company, began in 1972 and was completed on March 10, 1980.

Plate 38 - Page 38

The Kiosk of Trajan on Philae

This superb structure, which Roberts called a "hypaethral temple," as it had no roof, was built by Trajan in 105 AD, as a place to keep the sacred barge of Isis, which carried the statue of the goddess during the processions to the southern Nubian temples. The elegant structure is in the form of a four-sided kiosk, formed of 14 columns joined at the base by intercolumnar walls, most of which are undecorated. Capitals are of the floral type, each one different from the other, and the unusual cubes which surmount them were to have been carved with the effigy of the goddess Hathor. Although incomplete, because of its beauty the kiosk has become a symbol of Philae and is the best example of Egyptian taste and architectural skill during the Roman era.

Plate 39 - Page 39

The little temple of Wadi Kardassy

This elegant structure, which Roberts visited

on November 16, 1838, was situated in Lower Nubia on a hill that dominated the course of the Nile. Dismantled during the campaign to save the Nubian temples, the kiosk of Kardassy was reconstructed near the temple of Kalabsha, about forty kilometers away from the original site. The little temple, consecrated to the goddess Isis, is a small, square building with sides only 8 meters long, built in the late Ptolemaic era and completed during the period of Roman domination. It was originally formed of ten columns connected by low intercolumnar walls, only six of which remain standing. The two that frame the portal are surmounted by capitals with the face of the goddess Hathor, while the others have capitals with floral motifs.

Plate 40 - Page 40

The temple of Kalabsha

Roberts stayed in Kalabsha for several hours on November 3, 1838, with a longer visit on November 15, on his way back to Cairo. The most magnificent Nubian temple after Abu Simbel stood here. As it too was threatened by the waters of Lake Nasser, it was also dismantled and reconstructed between 1961 and 1963, when it was placed about forty miles farther south, in New Kalabsha, at the far western tip of the Great Dam. The edifice, built in the Ptolemaic era on the foundations of an older building and consecrated to the local god Mandulis, is 74 meters long.

Plate 41 - Page 41

The pronaos of the temple of Kalabsha

Beyond the pylon of the temple is a courtyard surrounded on three sides by a portico, whose columns Roberts saw mostly collapsed and buried in rubble. The back wall consists of the face of the pronaos, in the middle of which is an imposing portal. According to the rules of Ptolemaic Egyptian and Roman art, the intercolumns are partially closed by transennae covered with bas-reliefs which depict, among others, the gods Thoth and

Horus as they pour libations of lustral water on the sovereign. Inside the pronaos, twelve columns supported the ceiling, most of which has now collapsed.

Plate 42 - Page 42
The temple of Dakke

This small sanctuary, which Roberts visited on November 14, 1838, was consecrated to the god Thoth of Pnubs, an Ethiopian city. The edifice, which unlike all other Nubian temples faces north-south, was built at the end of the 3rd century BC by the Ethiopian king Arqamon and the Macedonian pharaoh who was his contemporary, Ptolemy IV Philopator. Later, Ptolemy VII Euergetes II added the pronaos, but only during the period of Roman domination did the temple assume its final shape, following the construction of the great pylon. This monument also had to be dismantled as a result of the construction of the Aswan High Dam, and was reconstructed in New Saboua.

Plate 43 - Page 43
The temple of Wadi Maharraka

Roberts visited this temple, which he had already briefly observed ten days earlier, on November 14, 1838. The edifice, of which remains only the hypostyle room sketched by the artist, stood in the ancient Hierasykaminos, the City of the Sacred Sycamore, which marked the southernmost boundary of the Roman Empire from 23 BC to 297 AD. The spiral staircase that led to the roof of the portico is a unique exception in Egyptian architecture, and can only be explained by the fact that the monument was almost certainly designed by a Roman architect. The temple of Wadi Maharraka was also disassembled during the campaign to save the Nubian monuments and was reconstructed at New Saboua.

Plate 44 - Page 44
The temple of Wadi Saboua

When he arrived here on November 6, 1838,

Roberts was quite struck by this temple standing a short distance from the Nile. Built by Ramesses II, it was consecrated to Amun and Re-Harakhti, the supreme gods of Egypt under Ramesses, and to the deified sovereign himself. The sanctuary met the same fate as almost all the other Nubian monuments saved by UNESCO: dismantled into large numbered blocks, it was later put back together about 4 kilometers from its original location, in an area known as New Saboua, on the shores of Lake Nasser.

Plate 45 - Page 45
The landing-stage by the temples of Abu Simbel

Roberts finally arrived at the rocky temples of Abu Simbel at dawn on November 9, 1838, after traveling up the Nile for 33 days. This extraordinary place had been discovered only 25 years earlier, in March 1813, by the Swiss explorer Johann Ludwig Burchardt. When the Scotsman approached the place, the gorge which separated the temple of Ramesses II from that dedicated to the goddess Hathor and her consort, the Queen Nefertari, was still partially blocked by a great sandlip that reached the waters of the Nile, but the monuments were still for the most part visible.

Plate 46 - Page 46
The Great Temple of Abu Simbel
The Great Temple of Ramesses II, built between 1290 and 1260 BC, is of colossal proportions. The facade is 38 meters long and 33 meters high, the equivalent of a modern nine-storey building. The four statues, which are over 20 meters high, finely reproduce the features of the sovereign, who wears the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt and the cobra symbol, the uraeus, the attribute of Osiris. One of the colossi, the third from the left, was repaired during the reign of the pharaoh Sethos II around 1200 BC, while the upper portion of the second one, which may have broken off

during the 34th year of Ramesses' reign following an earthquake, has lain on the ground ever since.

Plate 47 - Page 47
The colossi of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel

When work on the Great Dam on the Nile began on January 9, 1960, it was already clear that the waters of the reservoir would swallow up the temples of Abu Simbel forever. UNESCO then began an extraordinary rescue campaign and collected the enormous funds necessary. Based on a proposal by the Egyptian sculptor Ahmad Osman, it was decided to cut the temples into hundreds of blocks and then to reassemble them on an immense skeleton of reinforced concrete and rock, built in a higher position than the original, but with the same orientation. The Great Temple had to be taken apart into 807 blocks weighing an average of 20 tons each. The work, which began in the spring of 1964 by an international joint venture, was completed four years later.

Plate 48 - Page 48
The interior of the Great Temple at Abu Simbel

The ceiling of the underground pronaos, an enormous rectangular room 18 meters long and 16 meters wide, is supported by eight pillars arranged in two rows, 10 meters high, on each of which rests a statue representing Osiris with the features of Ramesses II. The giants on the left wear the white crown of Upper Egypt, those on the right the pschent, or double crown; their hands crossed on their chests hold the heka, or scepter, and the nekhakha, or scourge, both symbols of power and royalty.

Plate 49 - Page 49
The naos of the Great Temple of Abu Simbel
The naos, or sacralium, the most hidden and secret part of the temple, is 65 meters from


the entry door, in the heart of the mountain. In this small room, 4 meters wide and a little more than 7 long, are the statues of Amun-Re, Harmachis, Ptah and Ramesses II. Twice a year at each solstice, at 5:58 in the morning, a ray of sun penetrates the corridor that separates the entrance from the naos and shines on the left shoulder of Amun-Re. A few moments later, after touching the image of the pharaoh, the light falls on Harmachis. Within 20 minutes the "miracle of the sun" has vanished. On February 21 and October 21 the first rays of light fall right on the axis of the temple: the latter was the date of the first thirty year jubilee celebration of Ramesses II, here likened to a solar deity.

Plate 50 - Page 50
View of Cairo to the east

Once he had reached Abu Simbel, Roberts felt satisfied and decided not to go any farther. On November 11 he began the trip back, and on December 21, after navigating the Nile for over 850 kilometers, he was once again in Cairo. Fascinated by Islamic architecture, the artist stayed in the great city for over a month, and during this time made numerous sketches. This one and the six plates that follow are only a selection of the lithographs made from that impressive preparatory material. This scene shows the eastern part of the city, where the crowded el-Saiyda Zeinab quarter is today: to the left is the imposing hulk of the mosque of Sultan Hassan, to the right is the Citadel, and in the foreground is the portal of Citizenib.

Plate 51 - Page 51
Bab Zuwailah, seen from within the walls

Bab Zuwailah is one of the three great portals that still today open into the ancient walls of Cairo, built during the Fatimid dynasty. The massive structure, formed of two



semicircular towers that frame the portal with just one fornix, was completed around 1091. The slender minarets of the al-Muayyad mosque, one of the most sumptuous of the age of the Circassian Mamluks, rise from the massive towers. Also known as el-Ahmar, or "The Red," the mosque was begun in 1416 by Sultan al-Muayyad and was completed a year after his death, in 1421.

Plate 52 - Page 51

The interior of the mosque of Sultan Muayyad

The interior of the mosque built by Sultan Muayyad behind Bab Zuwaylah is a vast hypostyle room divided into a nave and two aisles, supported by columns with Corinthian capitals of pre-Islamic make which had certainly been recycled. The painted and gilt wooden ceilings, the windows with their elegant stucco frames, the finely decorated wooden and ivory pulpit and the dikka, or platform for the imam, resting on slender marble columns and visible in the center of the lithograph, all make the mosque one of the most beautiful in Cairo.

Plate 53 - Page 52

The entry to the mosque of Sultan Hassan

The mosque is considered one of the greatest works of Islamic art: Sultan Hassan en-Nasir built it between 1356 and 1363, perhaps based on a design by a Syrian architect. The façades, dotted with deep vertical niches in which are two rows of windows, are crowned by a protruding cornice with muqarnas (honeycomb decorations in stalactite form characteristic of Islamic architecture), which early in the century was embellished with battlements. The sultan's mausoleum, which juts out from the edifice like a cube, is surmounted by a cupola 60 meters high, reconstructed in the 18th century in Turkish style. The principal minaret, 81 and a half meters high, is still the tallest in Cairo.

Plate 54 - Page 52

The Cairo Citadel

The Citadel, which stands on a rocky hill at the foot of Mount Moqattam, in a position overlooking the city, was built by Saladin in 1176, perhaps using a portion of the covering of the lesser pyramids of Giza as building material. The small fortress was expanded numerous times over the centuries; within its imposing walls, the Pasha Mohammed Ali built a sumptuous residence, now used as a museum, and in 1824 work began on a great mosque in Ottoman style, which Roberts saw long before it was completed. In fact, Mohammed Ali's son Said did not finish the Alabaster Mosque until 1857.

Plate 55 - Page 53

The mosque of Sultan al-Ashraf Qaytbay

Built between 1472 and 1474 in the cemetery area of the so-called "Tombs of the Caliphs," the funeral mosque of Sultan al-Ashraf Qaytbay is considered one of the absolute masterpieces of Mamluk architecture, due to its perfectly balanced proportions and sumptuous ornamentation. The fine reticulated work that covers the surface of the cupola like lace and the elegant form of the minaret, fully 40 meters high, are particularly worthy of note.

Plate 56 - Page 53

The Mamluk Tombs

Unlike the pharaohs, who built their necropolises on the western banks of the Nile, the Mamluk sultans built their sepulchers to the east, not far from the Citadel. The funeral mosques and attached structures contained not only the tombs of the sovereigns, but also those of the princesses and court dignitaries who lived during the great epoch of the Bahrite Mamluks and the Circassian Mamluks, between the 13th and 15th centuries. With time, a large number of smaller tombs was built around them. As Friday was the usual day for honoring

the dead, wealthier families built closed courtyards and rooms for their tombs, where visiting families could stay, so that the cemeteries began to look like true cities. At present, the vast necropolises that stand outside the Fatimid walls are inhabited by about six hundred thousand Cairo residents.

Plate 57 - Page 54

The temple of Gebel Garabe

While he was staying in Cairo, Roberts decided to go to Syria with two other English travelers, John Pell and John Kinnear, and to visit Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Leaving on February 7, 1839, the Scottish artist came to the Red Sea three days later. By the 16th he had entered the mountains of the Sinai Peninsula and wanted to scale Gebel Garabe, a mountain with a well-preserved Egyptian temple at the top, perhaps dedicated to Hathor. The walls of the structure seemed covered with numerous hieroglyphs, royal cartouches and symbolic figures, while about fifteen still-intact steles stood among the ruins.

Plate 58 - Page 55

The monastery of Saint Catherine

Roberts arrived at the monastery of Saint Catherine on the night of February 18, 1839 and stayed there for three days. According to tradition, the monastery, which had remained essentially unchanged from the previous century, stood where Queen Helena, the mother of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great, had identified the exact spot in which Moses saw the Burning Bush. In 530 the emperor Justinian ordered the construction of a basilica on the site of the primitive chapel, and to protect the monks from desert marauders he built an imposing wall around the complex. The monastery takes its name from the fact that the remains of Saint Catherine are supposedly here, moved by angels from Alexandria to the peak of a nearby mountain and still enclosed in a sarcophagus next to the altar of the basilica.

Plate 59 - Page 56

The monastery of Saint Catherine and Mount Sinai

Nestled at a height of 1,560 meters in the heart of the Sinai, at the foot of Mount Sinai, the monastery of Saint Catherine is the smallest Christian diocese in the world. Nevertheless, a small Muslim community lives in complete harmony within its walls alongside the Orthodox monks, as this mountain is also sacred to Islam. In fact, after the Arabs conquered Egypt, Mohammed protected the monastery by issuing a document which is still on exhibit today.

Plate 60 - Page 56

The basilica of the Transfiguration

The 40 meter long interior of the basilica of the Transfiguration is divided into a nave and two aisles dotted with twelve monolithic granite columns, with different capitals on each one. The apsidal basin in the nave is covered with a mosaic dating from the 6th century, depicting the transfiguration of Christ. According to Orthodox tradition, the altar is hidden from the view of the faithful by means of the iconostasis, a magnificently decorated wooden screen. Most of the lamps which hang from the ceiling are decorated with ostrich eggs, a symbol of rebirth and continuity.

Plate 61 - Page 57

The island of Graia

On the evening of February 24, 1839, Roberts reached the Gulf of Aqaba, and two days later camped across from the island of Graia. Also known as the Island of the Pharaohs, some identify it with the port of Ezion Geber, built by Solomon. Inhabited as early as the Twentieth Dynasty (1188-1076 BC), it was then occupied by the Nabataeans, the Romans, the Arabs and the Crusaders, who built a fortress there which is now in ruins. Roberts reached Aqaba on the 27th and from there went on toward Petra and the Holy Land, but this, as we say, is another story.



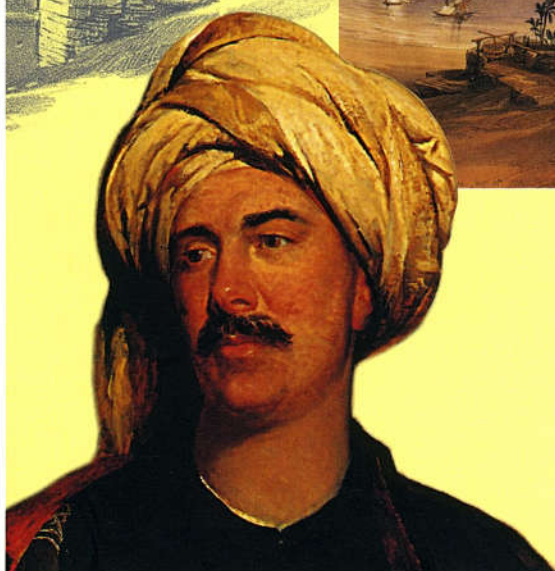
THE NILE NEAR WADI DABOD

On his way back from Cairo, Roberts sometimes saw large groups of crocodiles, often accompanied by herons who earned their food and lodging by removing parasites from the enormous reptiles. During the last century crocodiles still lived in large family groups on the sandy islets and shoals in the middle of the river, each year exacting a heavy toll in human life. Their dominance of the river declined only after the construction of the First Aswan Dam, and today they have almost disappeared from the portion of the river that flows through Egypt.

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David Roberts, born in 1796 near Edinburgh, was one of the most acclaimed landscape painters of the nineteenth century. In 1838 he left Europe for Egypt, where he drew all the main archaeological sites and Islamic monuments. The superb lithographs taken from his sketches and first published in



London between 1842 and 1849 are a fine essay on his virtuosity and represent an unforgettable journey through time along the Nile valley and across the Sinai peninsula.



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